

REVISED NIH POLICY ON SUBMISSION OF A REVISED (AMENDED) APPLICATION

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NOTICE: NOT-OD-03-041

National Institutes of Health (NIH)

On June 27, 1997 the NIH issued a notice in the NIH Guide for Grants and Contracts (see <http://grants.nih.gov/grants/guide/notice-files/not97-011.html>) that limited the number of revised or amended applications permitted as well as the time window during which those amended applications would be received. This announcement reiterates the NIH policy on the number of amended applications permitted but eliminates the two-year restriction on the receipt of those applications.

Accordingly, the NIH will not consider any A3 or higher amendment to an application for extramural support. But, beginning on the date of this announcement, there is no longer a time limit for the submission of the first and second revisions (A1 and A2). This policy applies to all NIH extramural funding mechanisms.

In submitting a revised application, it is worth noting that, a lengthy hiatus after the initial submission may be marked by significant advances in the scientific field and the comments of the reviewers may no longer be relevant. Principal investigators and their institutions need to exercise their best judgment in determining the advisability of submitting a revised application after several years have elapsed.

The policy limiting the number of revisions was established following analysis of data indicating that investigators who receive initial funding for an amended application have a lower success rate in obtaining support for a follow-on competing application. The likelihood of subsequent success decreased with an increasing number of amendments. After three reviews, it was felt that it was time for investigators to take a fresh approach to their research proposals.

Investigators who have submitted three versions of an application and have not been successful often ask NIH staff how different the next application submitted has to be to be considered a new application. It is recognized that investigators are trained in a particular field of science and are not likely to make drastic changes in their research interests, however, a new application following three reviews is expected to be substantially different in content and scope with more significant differences than are normally encountered in a revised application. Simply rewording the title and Specific Aims or incorporating minor changes in response to comments in the previous Summary Statement does not constitute a substantial change in scope or content. Changes to the Research Plan should produce a significant change in direction and approach for the research project. Thus, a new application would include substantial changes in all sections of the Research Plan, particularly the Specific Aims and the Research Design and Methods sections.

In the referral process, NIH staff look at all aspects of the application, not just the title and abstract. Requesting review by a

different review committee does not affect the implementation of this policy. When necessary, previous applications are analyzed for similarities to the present one. Thus, identical applications or those with only minor changes will not be accepted for review.

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[Return to Volume Index](#)

[Return to NIH Guide Main Index](#)



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